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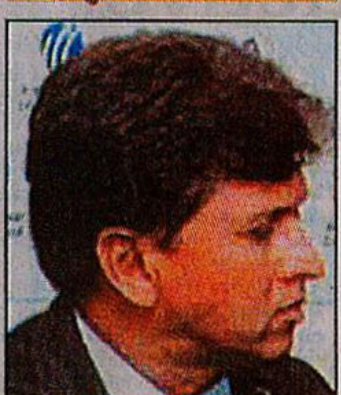
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Did U Know?

Graham Thorpe became the 22nd fielder to complete a century of catches when he took South African Nicky Boje's catch in the second innings of the third Test in Cape Town. Thorpe is the fifth Englishman to accomplish the feat, joining Colin Cowdrey (120), Ian Botham (120), Wally Hammond (110) and Graham Gooch (103).



Kiran More
(Indian chief selector)
"Bangladesh deserved that win. That was Bangladesh's day and full credit goes to them."
On the Tigers performance in the second ODI against India.



BTV & ESPN
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First Test, Day Two
Live at 9:20 am

ESPN
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8 pm

FA Cup (Third round)
Burnley v Liverpool
Live at 1 am (Saturday)



Premier Hockey
Abahani ensure runners-up spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani clinched runners-up spot in the Green Delta Premier Hockey League in style when they blanked Ajax Sporting Club 7-0 League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Indian Prakash Chalke struck four goals for last year's champions who improved their tally to 29 points from 12 matches.

They will play the last league match on January 8 against newly-crowned champions Usha Kira Chakra, who confirmed their maiden league title securing 33 points from 12 matches.

The winners led the first half 6-0. Apart from Prakash's goal fiesta, Musa Mia, captain Hedayetul Islam and Russell Mahmud Jimmy were on target for Abahani.

It's a dream Day One

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Chittagong



The Bangladesh team was happy to see everything going according to the script on the first day of the first Test against Zimbabwe yesterday.

Having scored 280 runs with six wickets intact, the Tigers are looking forward to bat at least two more sessions to keep the pressure on the visitors in their bid for a maiden Test victory.

The wicket at the MA Aziz Stadium proved that batting first would be the key to press for victory and captain Habibul Bashar not only won a very important toss but also guided his teammates with a superb knock of 94. Half-centuries by Nafees Iqbal and Rajin Saleh also proved that the Tigers have at last managed to escape an all-too-familiar early order collapse.

Talking about his second-time dismissal in the nervous 90s, Bashar admitted after the match that he had a break of concentration.

"I got a bit carried away. I was out on 97 (against Pakistan in Peshawar) before but I was thinking too much about our gameplan at that moment. Had I stayed at the wicket, it would have helped to implement our plans. It's also disappointing to

miss a hundred.

"Everyday is a new day in a Test match. We won two sessions out of three today. But just one slip could be fatal like it was against Pakistan where we dominated four days but lost the game on the final day.

We had a very good opening stand today, which have hardly got in other matches. Later, almost everybody made some contributions. We have to continue doing this for the rest of the match. First, we want to bat till tea.

"Bowling out an opposition twice would be difficult so we need as many runs as possible to put Zimbabwe under pressure. There is not much for the bowlers in the wicket. Pacers got nothing and the turn was really slow. So if a batsman wants to stay here, it would be tough to remove him. Still we are expecting it would turn more on the third day.

Coach Dav Whatmore regarded the day as Bangladesh's best in his tenure.

"I am pleased at the effort. I don't think we have been in such situation before. We got a decent start and the players hung on there and got the reward. It's best because we have the advantage at the end of the day," said the Sri Lankan-born Australian.

"We won the first and the third sessions but probably the second



STAND UP AND DELIVER: Bangladesh's Rajin Saleh is all set to cut one to the ropes on the first day of the first Test against Zimbabwe at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. Saleh was unbeaten on 60.

The hunt is on in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahbub Alam delivered the fastest ball when the Dhaka phase GrameenPhone pacer hunt programme began yesterday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The speed of the young right-arm pacer from Indira Road KC was clocked at 79 mph, the highest among nearly seven hundred participants on the first day of the three-day search.

Coach Sarwar Imran, who is conducting the programme, was delighted by the turnout and hoped that they would be able to unearth genuine quicks for the final leg.

"We have had an overwhelming response at every venue so far," said the former national coach.

Imran was particularly hopeful with a young lad from Mymensingh named Zahid Hasan who was measured at 81 mph.

"So far a right-arm pacer called Imam Hossain has bowled the fastest (82 mph) in the Khulna leg but Zahid effortlessly clocked his mark. Besides, his height is 6ft 2 inches which is an added advantage," Imran informed.

A four-member committee led by Imran have conducted the pacer hunt programme in Chittagong, Comilla, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Jessore and Mymensingh and after Dhaka they will travel to Barisal (January 10-11), Sylhet (January 13-14) and Bogra (17-18).

The committee will select eleven quick bowlers for the final round from eleven zones.

Mourning the famed Galle

Cricket

AFP, Galle

The clock at Galle International Cricket Stadium stands frozen at 9:26 am. That was the moment Sri Lanka's biggest disaster hit this southern city and shattered Jayananda Warnaweera's dream.

"It was a paradise," Sri Lanka's former star batsman said of the famed stadium, hailed as one of the most picturesque in the world with its stunning views of the historic Galle fort's ramparts and its Indian Ocean setting.

Now it is a wreck. The 10-metre (33 feet) wall of water that hit the field left behind a water, three vans, two cars and four boats -- "big boats", said Warnaweera, who is also the ground curator, surveying the mass of tangled debris still strewn around.

The 10 nets used by schools and players for practice are flattened. The indoor artificial turf centre, the only one in Sri Lanka's south, is gutted and unusable.

Warnaweera's carefully cultivated flowers and orchids have disappeared from their crushed pots and the fish ponds are full of sludge.

"This is like losing my family. This is my first love. I don't have the words to describe this damage, the disaster," he said.

Warnaweera's 21 groundsman and seven other staff used to spend up to 15 hours a day working at the stadium, which seated more than 10,000 fans for international matches with temporary stands erected.

"Because of our love for this ground, we didn't want to go anywhere else."

Now, they are transfixed by the damage.

In the shell of Warnaweera's office sits a huge water tank. "Tell me, how did that get in here?" he said with a note of incredulity. "We are going to have to knock down a wall to get it out."

On the day disaster struck, an under-15 schoolboy match between a Sri Lankan and an English side had been set to begin four minutes after the tsunami descended.

The players were on the field and able to scramble to safety, but the father of one of the English boys was killed as he sat in a bus. The toll could have been much higher if they had still been inside.

Warnaweera said the players had a long-running joke about the

nearby sea one day engulfing the ground, which was originally built as a racetrack in the 1830s and was transformed into a cricket field in 1865.

"Finally, it has happened. The worst thing is even now if someone says the sea is coming we don't doublecheck to see if they are joking -- we just run."

The current Sri Lankan side, which cancelled its tour of New Zealand after the tsunami disaster hit, has already visited and were "stunned", he said.

On Wednesday, the players launched a fund to aid tsunami survivors which they hope will be supported by cricket fans around the world.

Warnaweera was Galle's first-ever Test player -- he represented Sri Lanka from 1985 to 1995 -- and was instrumental in putting the stadium on the international circuit in June 1998.

It has until now been a lucky venue, with Sri Lanka winning seven of the 11 Test matches here, drawing two and losing two. Australian player Shane Warne took his 500th wicket here during Australia's last tour.

"It was my dream to make this an

Tsunami match No Sachin, Shoaib

AFP/REUTERS, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar said Thursday he would not be playing in Monday's all-star tsunami charity cricket match for Asia against a Rest of the World XI in Melbourne.

The 'Rawalpindi Express', whose commitment in the final cricket Test loss to Australia here on Wednesday was questioned by team coach Bob Woolmer, said he expects to be available for the tri-series against Australia and the West Indies late next week.

Shoaib Thursday defended his effort in the Sydney Test where he sent down only 15 overs out of a total 133.3 overs in Australia's first innings and didn't take the field in the second innings with a hamstring injury as the home side went on to win by nine wickets.

"I was in agony, I couldn't move," he told television reporters in response to Woolmer's criticism.

"I had slept on the floor all night. I'm not letting anyone down. I love playing for my country and my commitment is always there."

On his no-show at the charity

Abahani halt Vic charge

SPORTS REPORTER



Victoria Sporting club's seven-game winning run came to an end when their exciting run-chase against Abahani fell short by seven runs despite Bangladesh discard Ehsanul Haque hammering a brilliant 135 in an important Green Delta Premier Division Cricket League match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Victoria, aiming for a hat-trick of titles, were now in joint lead with newcomers Old DOHS and City Club although DOHS have played a game less.

Victoria, who are on 14 points from nine games, play their last two matches against big guns Mohammedan and City Club. Abahani have 12 from the same number of outings.

Last year's runners-up City Club posted an easy seven-wicket sail over Brothers Union at the BKSP while at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Mohammedan brought up their fifth victory with a nervy one-wicket win against Uttara Sporting Club.

VICTORIA V ABAHANI

Despite the absence of inform captain Naimur Rahman, who is nursing a damaged knee, Abahani still managed to bounce back from their frustrating defeat against Brothers Union in their last match in grand style.

Hasanuzzaman Rozel cracked a

94-ball 90 as Abahani amassed 275 for 9 in their share of 50 overs after being sent into bat.

The tall right-hander clobbered seven fours and two sixes in his dashing innings and had a 113-run fourth-wicket stand with Kumara Dharmasena after opener Imran Ahmed had set the tune with a run-a-ball 35.

Sri Lankan recruit Kumara Dharmasena contributed 42 off 58 deliveries.

Right-arm pacer Mohammad Shahajada was Victoria's most successful bowler claiming four wickets but conceded 62 in 9 overs.

Victoria made a perfect start in their chase as captain Azam Iqbal and Ehsanul added 84 runs for the opening stand just from 17 overs.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6

SCORES IN BRIEF

Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
ABAHANI: 275 for 9 in 50 overs (Imran 35, Saqib 18, Shamimul 25, Hasanuzzaman 90, Dharmasena 42, Neeyamur 16, Ahsan 15, Shahajada 4-62)
VICTORIA: 268 all out in 49.5 overs (Azam 37, Ehsanul 135, Fahad 41, Hasan 15, Alamgir 4-31, Dharmasena 2-34)
Result: Abahani won by seven runs.

Venue: BKSP
BROTHERS: 123 all out in 37.1 overs (Anwar 28, Fahim 16, Ziaur 12, Tareq 4-24, Alamgir 3-39, Mehrab 2-22)
CITY: 124 for 3 in 30.4 overs (Majid 54 not out, Moniruzzaman 23, Riyad 20, Tushar 18 not out, Kamrul 3-27)
Result: City Club won by seven wickets.

Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
UTTARA: 258 for 5 in 50 overs (Moniruzzaman 56, Arman 82, Azad 40, Hakim 47 not out)
MOHAMMEDAN: 259 for 9 in 48.3 overs (Parvez 34, Dhiman 98, Shamsur 69 not out, Golam Rahman 4-39)
Result: Mohammedan won by one wicket.

SA bring England down

REUTERS, Cape Town

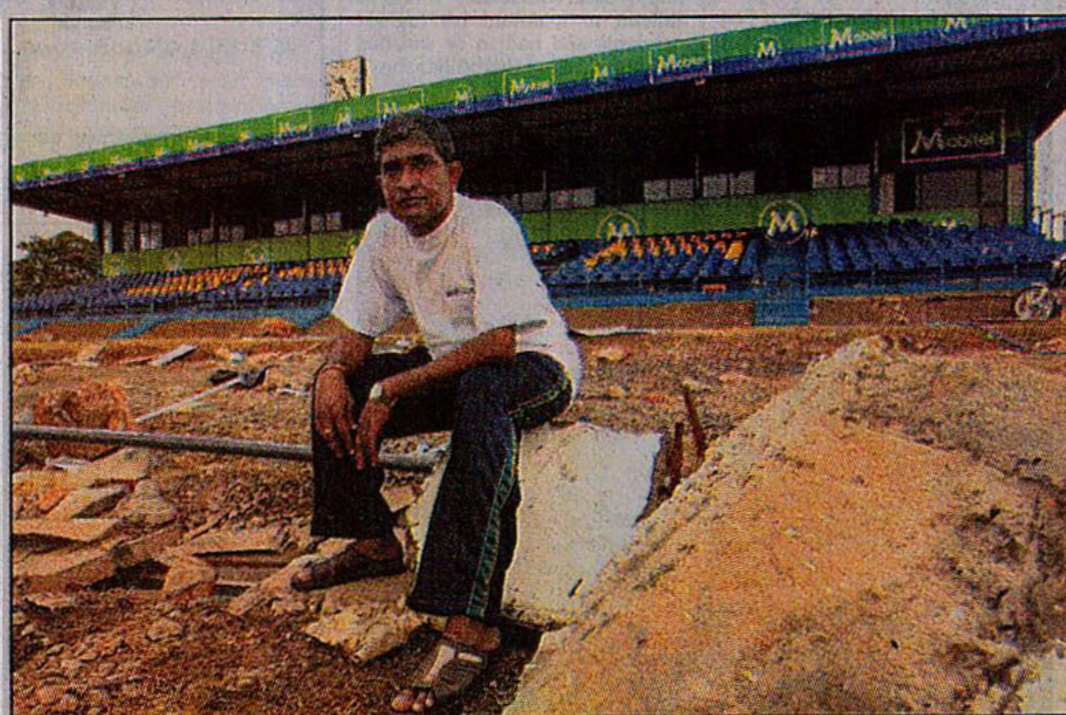
Spinner Nicky Boje and seamer Shaun Pollock took four wickets each as South Africa crushed England by 196 runs on the final afternoon of the third Test to level the series.

England, unbeaten for more than a year but set an unlikely 501 to win in just over five sessions, were dismissed for 304.

Left-arm spinner Boje, who missed the first Test after having surgery on a cancerous thyroid gland, took four for 71 from 34 overs, while metronomic fast bowler Pollock picked up four for 65 from 31 overs as the home side dominated in all departments.

England number 11 Steve Harmison showed up his teammates by top-scoring with a run-a-ball 42 and putting on 51 for the last wicket with Matthew Hoggard.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 2



REDUCED TO RUBBLE: Former Sri Lankan cricketer Jayananda Warnaweera sits on the rubble left behind by December 26's tsunami waves at the International Cricket Stadium in the southern coastal town of Galle on Wednesday.

BKSP junior tennis No local in boy's final

SPORTS REPORTER

There no will local representation when the boy's final of the BKSP third International Junior Tennis Championship takes place today.

Bangladesh's Amol Roy suffered a 5-7, 6-1, 6-1 defeat in the first semifinal against Kittipong of Thailand while Indian Sumit beat Oyama Tetta of Japan in the second semifinal.

Earlier, Amol was the only local player to enter the last four beating Sri Lankan Oshada 7-6, 6-1.

Kittipong of Thailand reached the semis defeating another Bangladesh player Ranjan Ram 6-4, 7-5 while Indian Sumit ended the local hopes of Prithul Mandal 6-3, 6-4 and Oyama Tetta of Japan won against Peter Postal of the Czech Republic.

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